



Virginia Commission on Youth Study of Alternative Education Options Advisory Group Meeting

General Assembly Building
5th Floor East Conference Room
July 31, 2008 at 10:00 a.m.

MINUTES

Members Present

The Honorable William H. Fralin, Jr., Virginia House of Delegates (electronically)
The Honorable Robert Brink, Virginia House of Delegates
Cynthia Cave, Department of Education
Anne Wescott, Department of Education
Michelle Vucchi, Department of Education
Laurel Marks, Department of Criminal Justice Services
Willie Carrington, Newport News Public Schools
Sarah Geddes, Just Children
Marie Sobers, Virginia Alternative Education Association
Steve Tomask for Dr. Rita Bishop, Roanoke City Schools
Pamela Fisher, Office of Comprehensive Services
Bet Neale, Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals
Christa Pierpont, Restorative Community Foundation
Andrea McMahon, Department of Juvenile Justice
Gary McCool Albemarle county Schools
Annette Lewis, Project Recovery
Ron Jones, Project Recovery
Arlene Cundiff, Citizen Member

Commission on Youth Staff Members

Amy Atkinson, Leah Hamaker, Cordell Hairston

Agenda Items

I. Welcome and Introductions

Amy M. Atkinson, Executive Director

Leah Hamaker, Legislative Policy Analyst

Ms. Atkinson called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Advisory Group members and the audience introduced themselves. Ms. Atkinson reminded the Advisory Group that this was the third year of the study of alternative education options in Virginia. She also highlighted a partnership with Virginia Commonwealth University for their Family Impact Seminar. Ms. Hamaker reviewed agenda items and mentioned that Commission members will vote on findings and recommendations from Advisory Group meetings during their last Commission meeting of the study year.

II. Project Recovery Program

Annette Lewis, Vice President of Programs & Director

Ron Jones, Program Manager, Youth Services & Education

Total Action Against Poverty(TAP)/This Valley Works

Ms. Lewis and Mr. Jones presented on the Total Action Against Poverty and This Valley Works. TAP is a community agency in Roanoke that works with the portion of the population that may be low-income, disenfranchised, in need of support or in need of services. They also have a focus on education. In 2005, TAP decided to address Roanoke's dropout crisis. They noted that, at that time, 500 youth had dropped out of Roanoke's schools. The question was raised what TAP could do to help get youth back into school. TAP formed a pilot program, Project Recovery, and partnered with Roanoke City Schools and Radford School of Social Work. In 2001, TAP was able to hire full-time staff for Project Recovery. Funding was also obtained from grants and private sources. However, the primary source of funding comes from the Western Virginia Classic game. It is held every year and currently is in its 9th year. The City of Salem became a partner and donated their football stadium. All of the proceeds of the game were applied to Project Recovery. To date, 628 students have been recovered and provided educational services. Of these, 381 went back to regular school. TAP provides group and individualized instruction. Funds from the United Way, Wachovia and the Western Virginia Classic football game make Project Recovery possible.

A question arose whether a student could be deemed "truant" if they attend Project Recovery this program. A representative of DOE indicated that the Code of Virginia does require all students under the age of 18 to be in school, but there are exceptions. The student must be released from the public school system. Roanoke City is working with Project Recovery to ensure the transition is a smooth one. The school division will typically examine how releasing the student could benefit them. The process consists of a written request from the parent, a meeting with key teachers and staff with the family at the parent's home. The school must note that the student is a dropout, but frequently this will be a student who is almost 18 and has only three to five high school credits. The per student funds are counted in accordance with Appropriations Act language.

Project Recovery's classes consist of various programs based on age and level.

III. Status of Alternative Education Options Recommendations from 2006 and 2007

Dr. Cynthia Cave, Office of Student Services

Virginia Department of Education

Dr. Cave discussed the previous year recommendations made to the Department of Education. Dr. Cave discussed the *Guide to Local Alternative Education Options* and the survey that was conducted regarding the availability of these programs. The Department of Education will oversee the Guide and make any appropriate revisions every two years.

Other recommendations that were discussed included the creation of

Student Assistance Programs (SAPs) Guidelines; Effective Schoolwide Discipline information/training and dissemination of information about other school-based evidence-based programs.

Dr. Cave informed the Advisory Group that a statewide summit on Dropout Prevention was being planned. Restorative justice, another evidence-based program, was also discussed.

IV. Board of Education's Proposed Revisions to the Standards of Accreditation

*Anne Wescott, Assistant Superintendent for Policy and Communications
Virginia Department of Education*

Ms. Wescott shared the Board of Education's proposed revisions to the Standards of Accreditation.

The revisions will:

- Require all students, beginning in middle school, to have an Academic and Career Plan;
- Incorporate the graduation rate into Virginia's Accountability system; and
- Prescribe the requirements for the Standard Technical and Advanced Technical Diplomas.

All middle schools must develop and maintain a personal Academic and Career Plan, as established by the Board of Education, for each seventh and eighth grade student. The plan shall include the student's educational goals and program of study for high school graduation and a post-secondary career pathway based on the student's academic and career interests. This plan is new and will have to be signed by parents and updated. The revisions also state that graduation rates must be at least 80 percent for full accreditation. Virginia will be one of the first states to have this requirement. The index counts students who graduate on time or within 5 years at 100 points. A GED certificate is 75 points. If a student remains in school for more than four years, it counts as 70 points. A certificate of completion is 60 points.

It was noted that GED completers earn 75 points versus high school graduates who earn 100 points. Public comments can be submitted to the Virginia Town Hall Website. The changes, if adopted, will take effect during the 2009-2010 school year.

Technical diplomas were also discussed. The academic requirements would meet or exceed the requirements for the Standard and Advanced Studies Diplomas. In addition, the student must earn four standard credits in career and technical education in a career concentration approved by the Board of Education.

Questions were raised about the fiscal impact of the career and technical plans upon the Commonwealth. There is no such impact upon the Commonwealth but there is the potential for this requirement to have a fiscal

impact upon school divisions.

The Board will offer school divisions guidelines for these plans. Those programs accredited by the Department may also comply with these requirements, if adopted.

V. Overview of Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP)

*Elizabeth Hawa, Office of Adult Education and Literacy
Virginia Department of Education*

Ms. Hawa gave an overview of Virginia's Individual Student Alternative Education Plan (ISAEP). ISAEP has several program goals, which include the following: the student must be enrolled in general education courses; the student receive career and technical educational training; and the student receive information about the importance of a high school diploma. To be placed in the ISAEP program, a student must score 410 or higher on each of the Official GED Practice Tests and achieve a grade-level score of 7.5 or higher on a standardized reading test. Students may not be placed in the program without the written agreement of the parents or guardians as well as the student.

In Virginia, 66 percent of students who enroll pass the GED. At anytime, a student has the option to re-enroll in school. Some school divisions have off-site locations, as well as offer coursework in the afternoon or on weekends. A student is typically in ISAEP for a year or less.

Each school division's ISAEP program is tailored to the needs of their division. Each student must take a minimum of ten hours of career and technical education classes and also 15 hours of GED preparation. Schools frequently partner with communities and businesses within the community.

VI. Discussion of Next Steps/Closing Comments

Advisory Group

The Advisory Group discussed the GED program/granting service. The testing centers administer the GED test.

There will be a meeting in September to discuss proposed legislative and budgetary recommendations. Information about that meeting will be sent to the Advisory Group. The next Advisory Group meeting is scheduled for September 16, 2008 at 1:00 p.m. On September 9, 2008, the Commission on Youth will meet at 1 p.m. in House Room C.

The meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

This was an electronic meeting. Delegate William H. Fralin, Jr., participated from his district office in Roanoke, Virginia.